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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2005

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER THREE
THEMES:

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HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

Laura Bush on 'Sesame Street' in Egypt - Milliyet
Alam Simsin's 'Auntie' Laura - Hurriyet
Source of Newsweek Koran Abuse Report Possibly a Sacked CIA
Official - Hurriyet
Peres: I Will Be Turkey's Envoy for Joining EU - Hurriyet
Cherie Blair Visits Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul
- Milliyet
Syrian Kurds Take to Streets - Milliyet
Iranian Kurds Preparing for Revolt against Tehran - Vatan
Reformists Blocked from Entering Presidential Race in Iran -
Aksam
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Australian Chief of Staff's Son Wounded in Iraq - Milliyet

OPINION MAKERS

First Lady Laura Bush on Egypt's 'Sesame Street' - Radikal
Nicholas Burns: US Cyprus Policy Clear - Cumhuriyet
Peres Ready to Lobby for Turkey's EU Membership - Zaman
Baykal Supports Israel's Gaza Withdrawal - Radikal
Sunni Imams Tortured in Iraq - Yeni Safak
Three Iraqis to be Executed in First Capital Punishments
after Saddam Rule - Yeni Safak
Bombs Shake Iraq: 70 Killed - Yeni Safak
Newsweek Changes Editorial Policy over 'Scandalous' Koran
Abuse Report - Zaman
Bush, Karzai 'Strategic Partners' - Radikal
Reformists Call for Boycott of Presidential Polls in Iran -
Cumhuriyet
Schroeder Presses for Polls in September - Zaman

BRIEFING

U/S Burns: US Policy on Cyprus Clear: US State Department
U/S Nicholas Burns told the Greek daily "Kozmas Tu Ependiti"
that the United States has clarified its policies with
regard to ending the isolation of Turkish Cyprus,
"Cumhuriyet" reports from Athens. 'We diplomatically
recognize the Greek Cypriot Administration, but we have also
begun establishing economic ties with the Turkish side,'
Burns said. 'We have begun taking Turkish students to the
United States as we have done with Greek Cypriot students,'
Burns noted. 'We definitely back people who support a
reunification in north Cyprus,' Burns stressed. Burns said
despite the progress seen in recent years, there are issues
that need settlement between Greece and Turkey: 'We tell
both countries that instead of blaming each other in the
press, you should solve problems through direct dialogue.
The US policy on the Aegean has not changed - we acknowledge
equal ground and air zones for the two sides.'

First Lady Laura Bush Visits Egypt: Turkish papers carry
international wire reports covering First Lady Laura Bush's
stop at Cairo on Sunday on the last leg of her Middle East
tour. Following a call on the wife of Egyptian President
Mubarak, Suzanne, First Lady Bush paid a visit to the set of
'Alam Simsin,' the Egyptian version of Sesame Street. The
US First Lady said protests in Jerusalem did not surprise
her. 'I know the feelings in the region. I have visited
the holy sites there, and many Palestinians and Israelis
gave me a warm welcome,' Bush said.

Gonul: Turkey-US Ties 'Unique': Turkish Defense Minister
Vecdi Gonul said to "Jane's Defense Weekly" that Turkey-US
relations are 'unique' besides being an 'integrating' factor
for other Turkish foreign policy elements such as the EU and
Russia, reports "Sabah." 'No relationship can be an
alternate to our ties with the United States,' Gonul
stressed. The PKK has 1,800 armed militants inside Turkey
and 3,300 outside, Gonul said, adding that US steps for
elimination of the terrorists in northern Iraq will
positively contribute to ties between US and Turkey. Gonul

said he did not expect in the short term reforms to diminish the role of the military in Turkish politics. The Turkish military aims to be at a point where it can be mobilized collectively and to be capable of defeating 'asymmetric' threats in the next decade, he emphasized. Gonul noted that Turkish land forces have been reduced by 15 percent and Turkish defense expenditures cut by 10 percent within the framework of modernization efforts.

Sunni Imams Tortured in Iraq: Islamist-oriented "Yeni Safak" carries a report claiming that a Sunni Imam has been tortured in Iraq. The source and byline of the report are not given. Following is the full text of the report:

"Here are the torture methods applied to innocent Iraqis by the new government of Iraq: Iraqi Muslim Scholars Council released yesterday pictures of torture applied to Iraqi scholars, imams and preachers. Above photographs show the imam of Shahid Yusuf Mosque in Baghdad's Sha'ab district, Hasan Hadi an-Naimi, who is a member of the Council. [Photographs show a goateed man with terrifying marks on his body.] Torture of an-Naimi displays the extent of brutality applied to Iraqis by the new government of Iraq. Naimi was arrested after prayers in his mosque on May 15, and five days later, was returned to his family in that condition. The Council said Naimi was given high-voltage electricity; his arm, leg and thoracic bones were broken; many parts of his body were incised and stitched; and he was tortured with iron rods on the head and other parts of his body while handcuffed."

First Executions in Iraq following the Saddam Rule: Three Iraqi convicts are to be executed in Iraq for killing policemen in the first capital punishments following the Saddam rule, reports "Yeni Safak." The court said the Ansar as-Sunna member Iraqis are to be executed in 10 days, but did not elaborate on how they will be put to death. The verdict has to be approved by the Iraqi Presidency Council chaired by President Talabani. The verdict is the first capital punishment decision by the new Iraqi government. Many dissidents were killed by hanging during the time of the toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, says the report.

Baykal Visits Israel, Palestine: Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal met with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah on Monday after earlier joining the Socialist International (SI) meetings in Tel Aviv, papers report. Baykal told the SI gathering that Palestine was part of the Ottoman lands for 400 years: 'Ottomans respected different religions when they ruled Jerusalem and other regions. They never imposed cultural or religious values on non-Muslim communities.' Violence should not be an option in the region, Baykal said, urging implementation of political and economic measures accompanied by a cease-fire for a permanent solution. The crucial tasks at present are recognition of Palestine as an independent state and the existence of Israel within secured borders, Baykal stressed. 'We know from our own experiences in Turkey since 1920s that taking different groups under a single administration is not easy. However, this is a necessity,' Baykal said. Baykal later said during a meeting with the Israeli Labor Party leader Shimon Peres that Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip should be supported. Peres voiced support for Turkey's full membership to the European Union. 'If necessary, I can contact the Europeans on this issue,' Peres reportedly said.

Sezer Due in Baku for Inauguration of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline: President Necdet Sezer is due in the Azerbaijani capital Baku on Wednesday to join officials from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the United States, Britain and Russia at the inauguration of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, papers report. The BTC pipeline promises to deliver 50 million tons of crude oil over the next 40 years.

1,500 Kurdish Turks Sue Turkey to Return to Villages: Turkish Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu said in response to a motion from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) that 3,676 villagers have returned to their homes in Turkey's mainly Kurdish eastern province Tunceli, reports "Cumhuriyet." Fifteen hundred have applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on the grounds that their return has been blocked, Aksu said.

Dissident Kurds Trained in Northern Iraq: Some 200 Iranian Kurdish militants from the 'Free Life Party,' encouraged by the 'success' of the Iraqi Kurds, have been receiving military training in Mount Kandil in northern Iraq in an effort to gain autonomy in Iran following a silence of two decades, "Radikal" cites a wire report by the Associated Press (AP). The Party's leader, Piryar Gabari, said a group of Kurdish militants had first engaged in fighting with security forces in Iran on May 9. A Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) official told AP that military operations against Iran from Iraqi soil will not be allowed.

Turkey to Join EU Military Project: Turkey is to join the EU 'combat groups' project organized for intervention in crises around the world, "Radikal" reports from Brussels. On Monday, Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul signed a letter of intent on the issue in Brussels. The 1,500-strong combat groups are equipped with high-technology weaponry. Turkey will only join coordination meetings and not the decision-making mechanism, says "Radikal."

Jerusalem Patriarch to be Tried in Istanbul: Turkish papers report that leaders of Orthodox churches from around the world are to meet in Istanbul to decide the fate of Jerusalem's Patriarch Irineos I, who has refused to step down after charges that he leased church property in Arab lands to Jewish investors. Meanwhile, papers report that Britain's Cherie Blair paid a visit on Sunday to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul. "Vatan" claims that Blair, a renowned counselor on human rights issues, provided the Patriarchate with legal counsel with regard to the rights of non-Muslim communities and property issues the Greek Orthodox community faced in Turkey.

Turkish Businessman Abducted in Iraq: A Turkish businessman, Ali Muslu, was kidnapped by insurgents from his hotel room in Baghdad four days ago, Turkish papers report. Muslu's family in Turkey's southern province of Hatay said they received a phone call from Muslu on Tuesday that he was being held hostage by Iraqi insurgents. Muslu is a sub-contractor ferrying construction material to Iraq.

EDITORIAL OPINION:

EU Issues: Referendum in France/Early Elections in Germany

"Schroeder's Term Seems to be Ending"

Zafer Atay commented in the economic-political "Dunya" (5/24): "The German PM was forced to declare an early election after his Social Democrats were defeated in the Social Democratic stronghold of North Rhine-Westphalia. An early election would be unusual for Germany. The last one was held in 1983. On the other hand, the opposition Christian Democrats are ready for an early election. The CDU is most likely to nominate Angela Merkel as its candidate for Prime Minister. If elected, Merkel would be the first woman prime minister in German history. Her election victory would also be a serious blow to Turkey's EU membership process. . Merkel is already making anti-Turkish remarks and stating her intention to block the Turkey-EU negotiation process if she becomes prime minister. There is no doubt that she will use her power to veto Turkey's accession process when the opportunity arises."

"Elections in Germany, Referendum in France"

Yilmaz Oztuna wrote in the conservative "Turkiye" (5/24): "An election victory for Germany's CDU will make Angela Merkel the country's new prime minister. Merkel's position against Turkey's EU accession is well known. But it is hoped that when and if she becomes the new German prime minister, she will be given an extensive briefing about the EU process with Turkey that will cause her to change her mind. At the same time, France is going through a referendum process that is the most important event for the future of EU. I expect that the 'yes' votes will win. Otherwise, the European Union will have to dedicate itself completely to the preparation of a new constitutional draft. This means the membership process for candidate countries, including Turkey, will slow down. All of this creates a very negative scenario for the future of the EU, because it will allow the US to enhance its power even more. Russia also would be very pleased about the weakness within the EU structure."

"Disabled Partnership"

Gungor Mengi commented in the mass appeal "Vatan" (5/24): "Both Germany's early election and the possible outcome of the referendum in France are bad news for Turkey's EU process. Angela Merkel's likely election as prime minister will end German support for Turkey's EU membership. On the other hand, supporters of the 'no' vote in France are leading, according to most recent polls. Those 'no' supporters have something in common with Merkel - they are also anti-Turkish. These are unpleasant developments, but they need not be the end of the world. The EU is a legal structure, after all, and we should not even consider the possibility that the October 3 start date for accession talks will be delayed. Merkel's 'privileged partnership' idea should not even be discussed in Turkey. A 'privileged partnership' is nothing more than a 'disabled partnership' with the European Union. Instead, Turkey should focus on completing its homework prior to the October 3 negotiation date."

EDELMAN